



Washington

National CLAS Standards Planning, Policies, and Collaboration

In 2006, the Washington State Board of Health created the [Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities](#).¹ The council includes representatives from 14 state agencies, boards, and commissions and is charged with collecting information and making recommendations to improve the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate services in public and private agencies. The council adopted National CLAS Standards implementation as a priority, and member agencies have been working to raise awareness of the National CLAS Standards and obtain agency support to implement supportive policies and practices.²

The Washington State Health Care Authority created the [Health Equity: Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Initiative](#).² The initiative workgroup developed a charter and began work to create an agency CLAS policy, conducted an organizational self-assessment, implemented CLAS practices in every division, and educated staff and partners on the importance of cultural competency and language services.

In accord with the initiative, Washington State agencies are taking different approaches to incorporating the National CLAS Standards into their programs and policies. For example, some are reviewing existing plans, policies, and practices, and finding ways to incorporate the National CLAS Standards into those activities. Others have developed workgroups with representatives from all agency divisions to develop specific work plans. One agency is incorporating the National CLAS Standards into its agency-wide strategic plan, has completed an organizational self-assessment, and is developing a work plan to promote supportive strategies. One important lesson learned is the need to engage agency leadership so they understand the importance of the National CLAS Standards and can facilitate effective adoption and implementation.

National CLAS Standards Training and Technical Assistance

The Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities is raising awareness about the National CLAS Standards and providing training and technical assistance to state agencies and other organizations. The council worked with health educators at the Department of Health to create a [CLAS training curriculum](#)³ that provides an in-depth understanding of the 15 National CLAS Standards, including adoption and implementation strategies. The curriculum consists of five 1.5-hour modules, each addressing a specific National CLAS Standards learning objective. Module 1 provides an introduction to the National CLAS Standards and the value of implementing them. Module 2 explains the importance of engaging leadership in National CLAS Standards implementation and provides strategies for developing a diverse workforce. Module 3 focuses on communication and language assistance, such as barriers for limited English proficiency populations and the benefits of ensuring competence for translation and interpretation. Module 4 addresses performance measurement and ways to partner with and engage communities. Finally, Module 5 discusses integration of the National CLAS Standards into policy and practice.

National CLAS Standards Dissemination

The Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities disseminates information on the National CLAS Standards through a webpage dedicated to the [Implementing CLAS Standards in Washington State](#)⁴ project, which is funded through a federal Office of Minority Health State Partnership Grant. The webpage provides a synopsis of the project, a link to the project [information sheet](#),⁵ and links to state and federal National CLAS Standards resources.

Continued on next page >

Endnotes

- 1 Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. (n.d.). *Health Equity*. Retrieved January 15, 2015, from Washington State Board of Health: <http://healthequity.wa.gov>.
- 2 Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. (2014, June). *State Action Plan to Eliminate Health Disparities Update*. Retrieved January 15, 2015, from Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities: <http://healthequity.wa.gov/Portals/9/Doc/Publications/Reports/HDC-Reports-July-2014-ActionPlan.pdf>.
- 3 Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. (2014, December). *State Action Plan to Eliminate Health Disparities Update*. Retrieved January 15, 2015, from Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities, Health Equity: <http://healthequity.wa.gov/Portals/9/Doc/Publications/Reports/HDC-Reports-Dec-2014-ActionPlan.pdf>.
- 4 Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. (n.d.). *Office of Minority Health State Partnership Grant*. Retrieved January 15, 2015, from Washington Board of Health, Health Equity: <http://healthequity.wa.gov/TheCouncilsWork/StatePartnershipGrant>.
- 5 Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. (n.d.). *Implementing CLAS Standards in Washington State*. Retrieved January 15, 2015, from Washington Board of Health, Health Equity: <http://healthequity.wa.gov/Portals/9/Doc/Language/CLAS/HDC-CLAS-INFO-2014.pdf>.